(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)

HUMAN FACULTIES

AND

THEIR DEVELOPMENT

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Different Conceptions as to our Faculties

ALL human success depends upon cultivating the sources of Nature and working out its hidden powers. Everything is full of potentialities that come to the surface automatically. They are on their course to advancement. From ethereal specks up to plasmic congeries in the human brain the initial substance passes through various stages of evolution in order to bring forth in us consciousness which is capable of proceeding yet farther. But here there comes a great divergence between the physical world and that of human consciousness. If the former needed no guidance and proceeded instinctively on lines already marked out. human consciousness, though so extensive and vast in its growth, needs definite external instructions for each and every further step. All conscious faculties in the human brain remain a hidden treasure unless developed from without. They find no instructions as to further progress from within the mind of man. Philosophy and religion before Islam did not do justice to man in this respect; they affected human destiny for thousands of years and checked its progress. The ancient world saw nothing excellent

in man, nor could they find any good purpose for us in the world. According to Hindu philosophy there was no reality in anything. All was illusion—" Maya ": while our happiness, they thought, lay in our absolute divorcement from it. According to the Buddhists, trouble and tribulation abounded everywhere, while man's salvation lay in his absolute annihilation. The Zoroastrian religion made evil as essential as good. The Universe, it taught, was in the hands of Ormazd and Ahriman—the god of Good and the god of Evil. The Greeks spoke of revengeful Nemesis with men as playthings in her hands. But the Church theology in the West surpassed every other school of thought in this respect. It taught that sin was inseparably attached to us, since we were born in it. Such teachings could hardly allow for or further any advancement. India, however, did not pay much practical heed to the Brahmanical or Buddhist philosophy. But the time came when belief in the theory of " Maya " —*illusion*—made the people indifferent even to their own safety when they became an easy prey to foreign invasion.

If the Church in the West failed to find any good in man, modern Rationalism has taken the opposite view, declaring that man possesses the highest capabilities. The two beliefs thus stand poles apart and to a certain extent are productive of evil results. If the latter overrated our faculties and, acting on the theory of the survival of the fittest, approved even aggressiveness on our part, when indulged in, to subordinate and exploit others, to further our ends, the former retarded

our progress on the material plane. But both spoke the partial truth, seeing that man is neither destitute of good nor free from evil tendencies.

The Holy Qur-án gives, however, a true description of human nature. Man, it says,[1] is endowed with the best of qualities and can make unlimited progress, but he may also go astray. Yet the Book also gives us good tidings in this respect. We can avail ourselves of the former, it says,, and escape the latter if we believe (in certain truths) and do good accordingly.[2] We have risen from animality and inherit animal inclinations which would create evil if not properly controlled. But they are also the finest bedrock of a splendid moral edifice.

Consciousness a New Faculty

Consciousness primarily appears in the animal world in its tangible form. Every animal possesses passions. But they differ in their form and measure in different animals. Some of the passions that are found prominently developed in one animal are extinct in another. We do not perceive, for example, the ferociousness of the tiger in the cow, nor the pig's dirty habits in the cat. Different animals are thus embodiments of different passions ; but all passions find a place in human consciousness. Man is, as it were, a moving zoo. His mind is like a menagerie, with a collection of wild animals in various cages—his brain cells. A man of strong character is like an able custodian of these

1. The Holy Qur-án, xcv. 4, 5.
2. The Holy Qur-án xcv. 6.

animals, who trains them to serve him faithfully when fit occasions arise. He has trained them and controls them. But an uncultured mind falls an easy prey to them. On the least excitement, he gives vent to his animal consciousness. He becomes an incarnation of the animal whose passion takes hold of him for the time being. The camel, for example, lives chiefly on thorns and exhibits the worst type of anger; but man may well surpass the brute if he does not know how to control such crude passions. Thus untrained minds coincide with different classes of animals, according to the ruling passions of the animal in them. They are pig, fox, dog, cat, tiger, and the like in human form. True humanity lies in the subjugation of these animal passions within us. We must emerge from animality. We must learn, first, how to make the best use of these passions and bring them under our control. But our mind is capable of going yet farther. It has been fashioned after God's mind. It needs guidance in order to follow His ways. Modern civilization seeks to do the same, but in a strictly material sense. Its aim is to achieve all that is observed in physical Nature. We find therein the best specimens of intellect, precision, regularity, and order. But we also observe liberality, compassion and mercy in Nature. Equity and justice are working side by side with economy. Again, Nature exhibits limitless precaution. Ample provision is always at its disposal for working out its designs. Beauty and sublimity pervade it everywhere. We aspire to achieve all this. We cannot, in fact, complete our progress without possessing these qualities of the

Worker in Nature from Whom guidance must come if we are to learn His ways. The Qur-án claims to be this guidance. It may seem a bold assertion, but the claims of the Book appear to me to be well substantiated.

In the first place, the human mind gives birth to individual consciousness. It is evolved from animal consciousness, which does not appreciate individual rights of ownership. The Book defines these rights and then widens this phase of mind into family consciousness by teaching us rules of domestic life. Then it enjoins us to observe charity and fellow-feeling in various ways. It produces in our mind national and racial consciousness. We begin to feel for others as we feel for ourselves or for those who stand near to us in various relation ships. Ethics thus become converted into high morality, which, in its turn, evolves into spirituality with the spirit of sacrifice as its chief feature. Thus we pass through various stages of the soul's development up to Cosmic Consciousness, when the human mind becomes merged in the Divine Mind.

But there are other avenues of progress before us besides moral and spiritual advancement. We have to learn various material sciences, and each science opens before us a new world. There is in us a capacity to cultivate religion, philosophy, art, poetry, and many other æsthetic tastes. We have to cultivate our occult powers as well. We have also to make researches in the various realms of the Universe ; and all these activities should be among the pursuits of a Muslim—as the Qur-án says. If a religion that claims to have come

from God does not invite our attention to all these branches of progress, it is not worthy of its name, and the Book which it cites as its authority from the Most High is but folklore.

The Garden of Adam

Human nature is a wonderful garden. It is full of trees with fruits of every taste and quality. But the tree becomes a forbidden tree which does not grow as it should. The garden of Adam (man) was his own nature, with innumerable capacities for good in it, but with a capability for doing evil as well. His story, as given in the Qur-án in the form of allegory, explains the whole case at once, beautifully and rationally. It places man on such a high pedestal that he even receives homage from God's angéls—the sentient beings who, according to the Qur-ánic version, move all forces of Nature. It is the highest position that man can attain when he becomes the ruler of Nature and learns its secrets and hidden things. The story speaks also of his expulsion from this state of greatness and bliss, when he deviates from the right path by tasting, metaphorically, the forbidden fruit in the garden, or, in other words, makes wrong use of his faculties.

Satan

We read also of another being, in the same garden, who tempts man thus to go astray, and that being is Satan. Whatever may be our conception of Satan, whether he be a separate entity and the spirit of evil, or only another name for our own capacity for sin, we

cannot ignore those evil influences which have been ascribed to him in the Holy Scriptures. We are often led wrong by invisible agencies, called, in the Qur-án, "Khannás." These may emanate from men, or from the unseen world. Invisibility is no proof of non-existence. We believe in numerous things which we cannot see. If temptation to evil has existed from the very beginning, and evil arises when we misuse things in any way, its birth must co-exist with their birth. If Adam is the first man he must have had some tempter with him in the garden. If everything can become subject to evil, the Qur-án has disclosed a great truth when it warns us against the working of Satan, which is everywhere. Psycho-physiology admits the human heart to be the mover of all actions, be they good or bad. There is no reason, therefore, to laugh at a tradition of the Prophet that says that Satan sometimes rules our hearts. But Satan, in the words of the Qur-án, says that those who submit to the Divine Laws are not under his control. [1] The Book says the same thing on another occasion when it declares that a person who fails to remember God will have the devil as his associate, [2] and that he is the worst associate. [1]

The Problem of Good and Evil

But the Book ascribes all immorality also to something else, and that is our inclination to evil, and the whole question thus revolves on what is our definition of good and evil. The genesis of evil has baffled

1. The Holy Qur-án, xv. 40. 2. The Holy Qur-án xliii. 36.

1. The Holy Qur-án xliii. 38.

the human mind from the beginning, but the Qur-án tells us the solution of the problem. A Book that came to develop human faculties on right lines should warn us against the things that create evil, seeing that they tend to destroy all our faculties. Everything in the Universe serves some useful purpose—utilized in a specified measure. If it is food in one form, or quantity for a species, it acts as a poison in another. For example, the quantity of water necessary to quench a camel's thirst will kill a man if he were to try to take it in one drink. Again, animals do certain things in certain ways, but it would amount to criminality or some dire social offence if we were to follow their example. Larceny, or the misappropriation of other's property, is no wrong in animals, since they neither possess a sense of ownership nor individual consciousness. There is another phase of the question : nothing in itself is wrong ; it is change of scene or occasion that makes it so. Evil does not come from God, but it is our misapplication of things that makes them evil. Opium, for instance, works wonders in alleviating pain, but it becomes poison if taken for food. Everything in Nature is a blessing, but it becomes a curse when misused. The same may be said of our passions. They become virtues or wickedness according to occasion. They benefit human society in one way, but they destroy its fabric in another. Good and evil are thus different measures of the same thing. Things have inherent qualities which they must exhibit, but it is the occasion that gives them the one character or the other.

Fire must burn and consume everything put into it. It is of immense good to us, but it does immense harm as well, if misapplied.

No doubt we acquire knowledge of propriety both of occasion and measure in the use of things through our own experience, when we have mishandled or misapplied them. This occurs often enough on the material plane, but we could not have gained of ourselves the knowledge that has come to us through Revelation on the moral plane. God is Creator of things that function diversely. Good and Evil must, therefore, be subject to the premeasurement of the Creator since different measures of the same thing give it different characters. These measures have been described as several laws concerning the thing in question, contained in all the Books of Revelation. The word Law, broadly speaking, has the same meaning everywhere. Its function is to allow one form or measure of a thing or action and disallow another, in science, society, or religion. The whole universe bears testimony to this. Things when combined in the prescribed measure or proportions give desirable results. Ordinary laboratory work is a proof of this. Divine Revelation comes to enlighten us on things concerning which we, of ourselves, could know nothing. If God created things and premeasured them thus, He, in a way, lies under an obligation to us to send us such knowledge.

Islamic Articles of Faith

It is therefore an article of faith with Muslims to believe in such measures as coming from God. Wrong measures are deemed crime in the province of Law, which doubtless opens the door to punishment, yet Law did not come to punish us, but to save us from the penalty of wrong as defined by it. It therefore cannot be taken as a messenger of punishment simply because it warns us against punishment. But so it appeared to St. Paul. He laboured under a confusion of ideas in his zeal in Romanizing Christianity. He maligned a blessing of God, *i.e*, Law, in order to introduce the pagan dogma of Blood and Atonement into the simple faith of Jesus, which was no other than the religion of "Law and Obedience," *i.e*, Islam. Thus belief in the said premeasurement as Divine Law is an article of faith with a Muslim. The other articles of faith in Islam are like unto it. They are as follows: (1) Allah, the Maker of Law. (2) Angels, the functionaries of His Law. (3) Books, the repositories of His Laws. (4) Messengers, the first receivers of the Law. (5) The Hereafter, the time of Requital to meet ends of the Law. (6) The Resurrection, our rising from the grave to begin a new life—according to our obedience or disobedience to the Law in this life.

The Qur-an came to Preach Knowledge

Divine laws rule the wholeworld, and the purpose of the Holy Book was to infuse into us the spirit of obed-

ience to them. Ignorance of the Law would naturally create trouble as tending to inordinacy in our conduct of life, and thus affecting the very growth of our faculties. But knowledge can save us from any such consequence and help us to thrive. The first Revelation received by the Holy Prophet on the very day when the mantle of prophethood fell on his shoulders disclose this same truth. It came to raise man to the "Honour" he deserved. It referred to "inordinacy" as the obstacle in the path to that honour. But it spoke also of "Knowledge" as the only efficacious means for eradicating inordinacy from our nature. What a grand and glorious pronouncement for a Revelation to make at the very outset ! It puts the whole case in a nutshell. It speaks of the honour to which we are destined, but which is withheld from us on account of what the Book terms "inordinacy"—that is to say, our disregard of proper limits in our conduct. It is the mover of all evil and it can be removed from us by attaining knowledge. The story of Adam, as given in the Qur-án, is intended to explain the honour of which the first Revelation speaks, while the rest of the Book is an eloquent commentary on it. The glorious Qur-án comes as the charter of the kingdom of God on the Earth that is to be given to man, the kingdom prayed for by Jesus, and here enters a doctrinal difference between Formal Christianity and Islam. The former makes sin unavoidable. It launches all its militancy against sin, which,as the Church maintains, entered into the world through eating of the tree of knowledge and makes atonement the only remedy. But Islam makes

the same knowledge our invincible bulwark against evil, which is disregard of the Divine limitations and the committing of inordinacy. It arises from the animality in us, since animals cannot respect the propriety of God's limitations simply for want of knowledge. Knowledge will enable us to appreciate the said "Measures" and prepare us to fight against all the forces of the Devil, who is a reality. Neither our belief in salvation by atonement nor our participation in the Holy Communion can purge our nature of sin.

Qur-anic Conception of Righteousness

Righteousness does not lie in doing meaningless things which are presumed to be pleasing to the Deity. All our religious observances must also stand on a basis of truth and utility. Virtue, according to the Qur-án, lies in doing good, while anything that brings harm is sin. God demands of us no ceremonial service for His sake. The blood and flesh of a sacrificed animal do not reach Him.[1] His pleasure or wrath becomes materialized in what brings happiness or misery to man. These, in themselves, are His pleasure and anger. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge, especially knowledge of the good or evil measure of things on every plane, ought to be the first object of our life. It will bring our faculties to their true fruition. No Book, before the Qur-án, preached this truth so strongly. Knowledge was not in the list of

1 The Holy Qur-án. xxii. 37.

virtues in ancient days. The Qur-án probed for the cause of evil in us and found knowledge to be the only remedy. And so we find to-day. Our knowledge of the material sciences brings prosperity, while our ignorance or disregard of moral laws creates misery and adversity.

The Kingdom of God

The Qur-án, at the advent of Islam, announced that the kingdom of heaven on the earth was at hand.[1] It was another name for true civilization, and in order to attain it, it was revealed to man for the first time that the rest of Nature had been created to subserve him, but that his ignorance of good morals had deprived him of his birthright. These morals were the morals of God Himself.

We had, therefore, to get knowledge of all things in heaven and on earth, and keep God before our eyes to act as our prototype. I have not found any other Book of wisdom, I say again, which teaches us to make the whole of Nature our study while keeping the Divine morals before us as our guide in life.

The Attainment of Knowledge—our Chief Object

The Book therefore commands us to be constant in the search for knowledge. We are asked to make proper use of ears and eyes with the help of our mind, for all knowledge comes to us through these organs. Our ears and eyes place it before our mind for its assimilation, and those who do not use these gifts of God by

1 The Holy Qur-án, xvi. 1.

duly observing things have been branded as animals in the Qur-án. They are the people whose hearts finally become blind to see any good. In many places the Book has said, " What ! is he who goes prone upon his face better guided or he who walks upright upon a straight path ? " " Say : He it is Who brought you into being and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts : little is it that you give thanks " (The Holy Qur-án, lxvii. 22, 23). The two classes spoken of here are animals and men. Those who do not duly observe things through ears, eyes, and hearts are mere animals ; they are destined to be ruled by others. The East once ruled the West, but the tables are turned. The secret lies in what has been said in the quotation. Ignorance makes man worse than animal, but knowledge makes man of a brute. The Book recommends us to do the following things to acquire knowledge :

(1) To cultivate the art of reading and writing (xcvi. 4,5).

(2) To make a right judgment of everything we hear (xvi. 65).

(3) To remember things for future guidance (xvi. 13).

(4) Observation of the universe (xvi. 10—15).

(5) To study history and biography with a view to learning their lesson (xii. 111) .

(6) To visit different parts of the world and observe the remains and relics of past nations and study the cause of their fall (iii. 136).

(7) To learn lessons from hardship and trial (iii. 104).

(8) To study the Divine Revelation (ii. 2).

These are the various sources of our knowledge quite apart from university courses. But the Qur-án goes further and lays a very special stress on our pondering over the things we observe. The Prophet declared that contemplation of a learned person for one night was more meritorious in the eyes of the Lord than his saying prayers for several nights. The Qur-án refers to four kinds of contemplation which have been termed "Tafaqquh", "Tadabbur," "Tafakkur" and "Ta'aqqul." They are, of course, different forms of thinking or making observation, but I have been compelled here to give their names in Arabic, as their English equivalents—thinking, pondering, meditation, and contemplation—fail to convey the shades of meaning in which they differ. I will try to explain them here.

(1) When we try to get a correct idea of things and think about their distinctive features in order to understand them properly, we do "Tafaqquh"; those who fail to do so have been described in the Book as blind, deaf, and dumb. It means that man has been given eyes, ears, and tongue, not for seeing, hearing, and talking, but for acquiring knowledge to his own advantage. If he fails to come to the right conclusion by the aid of his own eyes and ears, he must inquire concerning it from others. Similarly, we have to use our power of speech for the enlightenment of others.

(2) "Tadabbur" means to acquire such knowledge about things as may enable us to understand the object of their coming into existence. We should try

to understand the ins and outs of the things around us, so that we may use them properly. The two kinds of thinking have been recommended to us specially when reading the Qur-án. First we have to read it intelligently and then to find out the object of its revelation and work on its guidance so that we may attain that object. We ought to do the same when we read any other Book.

(3) "Tafakkur."—This means our thinking over things to find out the ways by which they have come into existence. Under this kind of thinking we try to discover the properties of things.

(4) "Ta'aqqul."—This means to acquire that kind of knowledge which will enable us to make a right use of all things in our life. We have not only to find out the properties of things but also to discover the proportions in which they are to be combined with each other to make new things. In fact, the third and fourth kind of meditation actuated all scientific researches among the early Muslims. If the first enables us to understand things in their general character, the second speaks of their why and how. If the third brings to us knowledge of their properties, the fourth shows us the way to make use of them in our daily life. How can we take exception to a religion which makes such methods of contemplation meritorious in the eyes of God? The Qur-án draws our attention to various manifestations of Nature, which, it says, have been created for our benefit. It goes on to emphasize the necessity for attainment of knowledge in order to bring them under our control.

Knowledge Develops Faculties

In fact, knowledge alone can bring our faculties to their real growth. Food and drink, of course, cannot be dispensed with, since we must keep soul and body together for further progress, but knowledge is the water of life, on the human plane, and a Book from God must preach this if it comes to cultivate our capabilities. Animals have also been endowed with organs of knowledge, but we have not only to see and hear things but also, as the Qur-án demands from us, to understand them, and make our observations thereon.

The subject under discussion would remain incomplete were I not to speak here, briefly, of certain doctrines prevalent among men that retard the development of our faculties.

Fatalism

The Qur-án condemns it. There is no such thing in Islam. It is another name for Predestination. It makes man a helpless creature of the circumstances in which he has been placed, and leaves no chance for any effort to better his condition. It hinders all progress and stunts the growth of his condition. A book like the Qur-án, that charges man with responsibility and submits all his actions to judgment in the light of the Law, cannot teach the principle of Fatalism. All penal laws in civilized nations exempt from punishment such offenders as commit wrong under compulsion or by reason of insanity. Where there is no free will there is no punishment. If God has already chosen some for doing good and others for committing sin,

what becomes of the question of punishment? But the Qur-án says that we come here with a pure and perfect nature, for its further growth. It reminds us of our possibilities and probabilities and gives us guidance wherewith to work them out. It promises reward and gives warning against severe chastisement. How can it be blamed for teaching such a principle as Fatalism? It speaks of the Divine discretion in certain cases relating to the Divine guidance, or blessing, and this has misled some of the Western savants into the belief that the doctrine of Fatalism is to be found in the Qur-án. But they have not realized the point.

Official Christianity, on the other hand, divides the human race into the "saved" and the "unsaved." Those born in a Christian house and baptized in the name of Jesus belong to the former class, but those who never heard of the Baptismal dogma are destined for Hell. So it is accident or predestination that apportions between men eternal life and everlasting perdition. There is no chance for action or character to influence a man's destiny. Such fatalistic teachings cannot help advancement. For centuries it was held up in Christendom. But when, during the last two centuries, the said preordained division was taken as a matter concerning exclusively the coming life, Christendom was set on the path of progress, which it could not pursue to the end until it was released from the strar-glehold of the Church.

Those who believe in the Transmigration of Souls give, indirectly, their adhesion to Fatalism. If pain and pleasure come to us as the reward of our actions

in a past state of existence, they come as a thing preordained—beyond our control. We may shape our destinies in the coming life by doing good things, an apologist for the doctrine would say. But as a matter of fact we cannot do so. We are already doomed to good or evil on our entry into this world. We come here, on this theory, to reap the fruits of our past actions, which are unchangeable. We can do no further good now, since good, in this life, is but a fruit of the past. How can we do it here to better our future, if we could not do so in the past? We cannot improve our present to better our future if that future is already settled for us. It is a fatalistic round in which we move, so say the holders of the doctrine. In short, if we believe that our present life is but a shadow of our former life, our present life is doomed. We are automata set in motion by our past aotions. In short, while all such theories are destructive to the growth of our faculties, Islam brings us an eternal hope. The Qur-án declares that we are the makers of our destinies. It speaks of the material created for our benefit and teaches us how to make use of it to our best advantage. We may do wrong, but the Great Judge will make allowance if our wrong-doing arises from genuine error or forgetfulness, or on account of some unavoidable disability on our part.[1] If evil be the chief drawback in the way of our true evolution, it is when we are in fault.

Evil an Acquisition

There is no such thing as predestined misguidance, as is thought by some. That which has come from

[1] The Holy Qur-án, ii. 286.

God is good ; it is we who turn it into evil. Though the Qur-án speaks of this very clearly and makes us solely responsible for our own future, yet some stray verses are taken from the Holy Book to lend support to the above erroneous theories. It must be remembered that the Holy Book explains the problem in the light of things in Nature.

Everything has been created under some law. Evil and good, too, are the creations of the law. Man, as the Book says, has been given free-will with the knowledge of right and wrong. He is allowed to make use of his own discretion. God wants him to exercise his judgment on right lines, and He guides him to that end. But how could man exercise his own judgment if he were a mere automaton ? Doubtless he is liable to make wrong judgments, but he must have free-will, with guidance to make good judgment, and he must be allowed to do as he likes. He may suffer in consequence, but pefection will come to him through hardship and trial. It he be punished, it will prove a discipline for him if the punishment comes to him as the outcome of his wrongful actions. The Qur-án puts this case beautifully in the following verses :

"Does he think that no one sees him ? " "Have We not given him two eyes " " And a tongue and two lips," " And pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways ?" " But he would not attempt the uphill road." (xc. 7—11.)

The two ways spoken of are " the way of good and the way of evil," as the Holy Prophet says. Revelation was sent to point them out to man, but he has the

liberty of choice. Moreover, he has been given eyes and ears. He should make proper use of them. He has also been given tongue and lips to ask for guidance. He must make his own observation of right and wrong. It he then goes against it trouble will come upon him according to the Divine Laws. For example, our daily observation gives us the Law of Light and Darkness. If we close our shutters and pull down our blinds, our room becomes darkened as a result of our actions. But that too is in compliance with the natural laws. Nature may be taken as an inexorable agent in exacting its penalties from those who break its laws, but it is our actions which set Nature in motion. The same may be said of God, the Ruler of Nature.

Misguidance a Punishment from God

The Book, when dealing with the question of punishment, lays down a golden principle. It says that God's punishment never comes to those who have not received any message of guidance from Him. [1] The Book also speaks favourably of those who have become incapacitated from listening to the voice of their own conscience, or making proper observation, from causes beyond their control.

Necessary knowledge, the Book says, comes to man from God in the form of Revelation, especially as regards things beyond his capacity for finding out. Moreover, the whole universe is in itself a Book of Guidance for an observant eye. It has been called an open book in the Qur-án, [2] for the same reason and

1 The Holy Qur-án xvii. 15. 2 The Holy Qur-án vi. 59.

conforms to the following Qur-ánic teachings. If a person goes against the knowledge he has received, he is forgiven for the first time. He is reminded of the right path, and if he comes back from the wrong he is rewarded for so doing. Those who tread the right path are amply rewarded, but if they wilfully go to the other, punishment comes to them as a corrective measure. If a person closes his eyes and ears to all that is good, he is left to his choice. Callousness then overtakes him, and he becomes, as it were, deaf, dumb, and blind to all good things. The punishment comes to full when evil encompasses him,[1] and he becomes totally destitute of any redeeming feature. A light from God came for his guidance, but he erred and remained far from it, and was lost in utter darkness.[2] All this takes place under fixed Divine Laws. When we break the laws of guidance, misguidance comes to us as a form of punishment. In this sense, God, somewhere in the Scriptures, has been spoken of as the cause of all.

Divine Discretion in Guidance

But God, out of His compassion, sometimes remits punishment. Those who do good have been assured of goodly rewards for their actions, but in the case of others He may punish them or forgive them, as He pleases ; but both measures are adopted by God for our good. If forgiveness fails to rectify a wrong-doer and increases stubbornness in him, punishment is the only alternative left to the Great Disciplinarian. The same discretion is used by God in dispensing His worldly

1 The Holy Qur-án ii. 81 2 The Holy Qur-án ii. 17

blessings. Everyone is allowed to earn wealth. Ample treasures are opened to those who exert and use their property in the service of others. They increase their wealth. But if they indulge in excess and mischief their excesses bring them to ruin. Even in this case they are saved therefrom, and may remain in affluence, if any good is likely to come of them; but if they squander their fortunes only for their own indulgence and resort to iniquity, they are deprived of their possessions. Here again, the object before the Lord is purely benevolent and not vengeful.

Pride and Hypocrisy Undermine Faculties

The Book speaks especially of two things which, if not rooted out at their commencement, will bring us to utter callousness, depriving us of all guidance. These are Pride and Hypocrisy. Either we overestimate our abilities or underrate them. The former engenders pride and make us heedless of all warning. The other germinates timidity and cowardice. Those who are proud pay no heed to any word of wisdom. They shall come to ruin. The other class changes sides. In the beginning, they come to good people and listen to their words, but they go, too, to the wicked people and forget all the lessons of the good. Belief in truth is on their lips, but their actions belie it.[1] An aversion to good, amounting to a disease, appears in their hearts, which increases day by day and brings them finally to a moral death.

1 The Holy Qur-án, ii. 8—15.

Intercession

Intermediation, though a great hindrance to our progress, is yet looked upon with favour by a large portion of humanity, especially in religion. It kills our sense of self-reliance that is so much insisted on in the Qur-án. We wish to throw our burden on somebody else's shoulders. The wise Book prohibits it and asks us to bear our own cross. While belief in a Mediator is a necessary sequel to one's belief in the Atonement, the Qur-án clearly denounces the tenet. It says that no one can intercede with Allah, but with His permission,[1] which is vouchsafed only to those who know His Will and cannot go against it. Though, according to Qur-ánic principles, no one can claim any favour from the Great Judge, Who relies solely on Himself, yet there are some unfortunate creatures who have become incapable of doing any work of merit, by circumstances beyond their own control. They do deserve His mercy. Theirs is a case of special favour. It also provides an occasion for establishing the dignity of the true servants of God who are allowed to intercede with Him on such occasions.

In short, we have to work on with our own faculties, and in this lies our excellence and greatness. The Paradise of the Qur-án is neither a confined and delimitated locality nor does it consist of things we find here on earth. It is a further growth of our mental and spiritual condition. If our faculties thrive and become purified of all animal corruption, we attain the object of our life and we enter into the heavenly life;

2 Holy Qur-án, ii. 255.

but if they are concealed under carnal passions and remain devoted to their behests, they become corrupted and we fail to reach our goal of life. We must needs undergo a purgatorial course and enter into Hell after this life for final purification, in order to throw off the carnal hindrances that will retard our progress in the life beyond the grave. The word "Jannat," the equivalent in Arabic to the English word "heaven," is full of meaning. It discloses the reality of the case. It means *some things hidden*, and it also means *an evergreen garden*, full of flowers and fruits. It is our own nature. It is full of hidden faculties, but when they have become developed to their full extent we shall live in the garden of heaven. That happy land exists beyond the grave. It, in its extensiveness, circumferences the earth and the heavens. It is a great heritage, but it needs a good preparation on the earth before we can enter into it.